

International conference "Challenges of contemporary society": a general presentation

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The International Conference “*Challenges of Contemporary Society*”: A General Presentation

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Abstract

The paper provides a general presentation of the International Conference “*Challenges of Contemporary Society*” organized by the Institute for Sociological, Political and Juridical Research at the “Ss. Cyril and Methodius” University in Skopje, Macedonia. The conference was held on 12-13 November 2015. As a Eastern European regional event, it has attracted participation of research fellows from several European countries, Turkey and USA.

Keywords: regional conference, Macedonia



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Conference Organizer

International Conference “Challenges of Contemporary Society”

Institute for Sociological, Political and Juridical Research

Ss. Cyril and Methodius University

Skopje, Republic of Macedonia

12 November 2015

Conference Presentation

On the occasion of marking the 50th anniversary of the Institute for Sociological, Political and Juridical Research of Ss. Cyril and Methodius University in Skopje, an international conference entitled *Challenges of Contemporary Society* took place on the 12 November 2015.

The aim of the conference was to provide a forum for an interdisciplinary discussion of the many recent changes that have followed the global financial and political crisis, and which have brought to the surface a number of growing challenges for contemporary society. Academics and other professionals discussed the future prospects of these global developments and tried to provide answers to the question whether they will entail greater insecurity or will provide new opportunities for the advancement of society.

More than 60 papers from the fields of sociology, political science, communication science, law, management and psychology, among others, were presented at the conference at one panel and four thematic sessions: *Challenges for democracy and democratization; New media, new communication, new identities; Social challenges for contemporary society; and Management, business and workforce issues in the 21st Century*. More than 90 established and early career researchers from several countries including Albania, Bulgaria, Macedonia, Montenegro, Romania and Turkey took part in the event with presentations and discussions. More than 40 conference papers will be published in the conference proceedings which will be out of press in April 2016.

International Program Committee

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Participant Countries

Faculty, Research fellows, Master students and Doctoral students from: Albania, Bulgaria, Macedonia, Montenegro, Romania, Serbia and Turkey.

Conference Proceedings

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Abstracts (selection)**"Students' Ethnic Identities vs. Social Integration"****Petar Atanasov, Emilija Simoska, and Bojana Naumovska**

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Macedonia

Abstract

It seems that in the modern European societies some of the collective identities start to transform themselves. One of the basic cultural collective identity, the ethnicity, as an action oriented identity, looks like as it is not very important in the presence of European people. In the Macedonian society, also, there are some modern processes concerning the development of stronger personal identities of the youth that try to change the way of living. Nevertheless, past research showed that in Macedonia the ethnic identities matter a lot as part of the cultural, political and social living. Namely, the ethnic identities interfere with the quality of life, depending on the fact whether you are part of the majority ethnic group, the Macedonians, or member of the smaller communities that are not in majority, the Albanians, the Turks, the Roma, the Vlachs, the Serbs and the Bosnians. This paper will research the intensity of the ethnic identities among the university students from different national groups through their ethnic distance towards other groups. We will argue that the strong presence of ethnic thinking might be obstacle for bigger social integration. Additional research question will add to the analysis documenting 'hostile' stereotypes, the presence of the clear ethnic world view among students (especially Albanians), as general trend in society, as well as the small prospect of overcoming the ethnic divide.

"State Capture and Political Clientelism in Central and Eastern Europe"**Camelia Florela Voinea**

Faculty of Political Science

University of Bucharest

Romania

Abstract

This paper reviews theory, research literature and data with respect to state capture phenomena in the Central, Eastern European democracies. Specific aspects of state capture in the Eastern European post-communist polities are described and analyzed based on data provided by international and European organizations and joint survey projects.

"Bulgaria, Cuba, Uzbekistan: Three Very Different Experiences with Communism that Turned Up to an Impasse"**Stephan E. Nikolov**

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Bulgaria

Abstract

Bulgaria, Cuba and Uzbekistan seem quite different and distant one from another. It appears futile to juxtapose Southeast European Bulgaria, Central American island of Cuba, and Central Asian landlocked

Uzbekistan. Cuba is almost completely Catholic, though with relatively strong impact of the pagan Santeria; Uzbekistan is predominantly moderate Moslem country; in Bulgaria, Eastern Orthodox Christianity prevails, with some 10-15% of mainly Moslem population and small presence of predominantly Christian denominations. Ethnically, Cuba is presumably most diverse, with white and Black people, and descendants of many mixed marriages. Ethnic picture in Bulgaria matches that of confessions presented, with prevalence of Christian Bulgarians, but also Bulgarian Turks, Roma, Bulgarian Moslems (Pomaks), and negligible other groups of Armenians, Jews and other – with all typical for the Balkans disparity between official data, self identification controversy, and claims of adjacent countries to share separated by the borders ethnicities often with other names. Uzbeks constitute 81% of their country's population, followed by Russians, Tajiks, Kazakhs, and others more than 100 Nations and nationalities. Despite their remoteness and attachment to diverse types of cultural traditions, national specificity, and historical background, deeper knowing of these countries reveal some significant similarities. It is the communist legacy that brings them together. Article is focused on the analysis of their experience with the post-communist realities.

“Neo-liberal Restructuring and the EU Integration of the Western Balkans”

Jonilda Rrapaj
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Turkey

Abstract

The main rhetoric of the European Union for the Western Balkans developed around the idea that if the Western Balkans implement the reforms recommended by the EU, they will develop economically, build a healthy democracy based on a functional rule of law system. In case of the failure of the reforms to achieve these objectives, which indeed is often the case, the answer is founded in the (liberal) modernization theory which argues that the reasons for the failure must be found on the domestic problems and the wrong implementation of the reforms whose beneficiary properties are taken for granted. This paper argues that despite the fact that the Western Balkans faces many domestic socio-economic problems, structural causes and mechanisms/processes, which emerge from the operation of global economic system rest at the center of this failure. Based on the insights of the neo-Gramscian perspective, it analyzes the EU integration strategies towards the Western Balkans as part of the neo-liberal restructuring project. The complex and dynamic relations based on consent and coercion during this process and the role of the European Commission as the main instrument of this strategy will constitute the focus of this paper.

“HR Competency Framework Development as a Basis for Creation of Dual System on HRM Educational Program”

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Abstract

The importance of knowledge, skills, and competencies to individuals and society is widely accepted among policymakers in OECD countries. The competency is much more than just knowledge and skills. It involves ability to meet complex demands, by drawing and mobilizing personal traits (including abilities, values and attitudes/behavior) in a particular context. From an economic viewpoint, competencies of individuals are seen as important because they contribute to: boosting productivity and market competitiveness; minimizing unemployment through developing an adaptive and qualified labor force; and creating an environment for innovation in a world dominated by global competition. The concept of key competencies has become a vital component in the vocabulary of educational policy-makers and reformers. And the question of assessing and measuring the output of educational processes is a discussion topic that triggers keen interest all over the globe. HRM must meet higher expectation that confront contemporary organizations and the HR profession should be upgraded. HR professionals must not only observe, but also understand and adapt to the changing business conditions and business trends. HR professionals are expected to contribute by the competencies they possess. HR practices must become more integrated, aligned, and innovative. HR professionals with the right competencies will be more likely to engage employees, to serve customers, and to create intangible shareholder wealth. This paper describes a competency framework for the design and implementation of a competency-based curriculum for dual postgraduate HRM education at the Institute for Sociological, Political and Juridical Research, within the University "Ss. Cyril and Methodius" - Skopje.

"Opportunities for Development of Women Entrepreneurship in the Republic of Macedonia"

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Abstract

No doubt that women entrepreneurship is as an important source of economic growth that can create new jobs for the entrepreneurs themselves and others. Additionally, involvement of women into the business also provides society with different solutions to management, organization and business problems. Unfortunately, in the Republic of Macedonia they still represent a minority of all entrepreneurs. Some traditional societal attitudes and norms in Macedonia, such as gender-based barriers to starting and growing their businesses, discriminatory property, matrimonial and inheritance laws and/or cultural practices; lack of access to formal finance mechanisms; limited mobility and access to information and networks, inhibit many Macedonian women from even considering starting a business. This paper is about women entrepreneurship in Macedonia, challenges and opportunities for its development, as well as problems that Macedonian women entrepreneurs are facing. Integral part of this paper is the analysis of the role that government as well as various developmental organizations should have in order to promote women entrepreneurs through various schemes, incentives and promotional measures. The paper methodology will be largely based on the classical methods of desk-based research of the available literature and data.

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